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Gender, Metacognition and Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Malay ESL Learners

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Abstract

Research has shown that female students are likely to be more successful in language learning when compared to male students due to the differences in their metacognitive learning strategies (J. Sunderland, Language Teaching 33 (2000)). This study aims to investigate if there are differences in metacognition, vocabulary learning strategies and the vocabulary size between male and female students. The instruments utilised for this study were a Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire (I. S. P. Nation, Learning Vocabulary in Another Language, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (2001)) and the Vocabulary Levels Test (N. Zhao, English Language Teaching 2, 4 (2009)). 113 pre-university ESL learners participated in this study. A quantitative research design was employed. Although a somewhat positive correlation between female students and vocabulary learning strategies is expected based on previous studies, findings of this study however, showed that there is no significant difference between the vocabulary size and metacognitive learning strategies used by both male and female students. A better understanding of the relationship between metacognitive strategies, vocabulary size and gender will enhance teachers' and learners' awareness of the use of the said strategies for a more effective vocabulary acquisition. The findings provide beneficial pedagogical implications relevant not only to language instructors but also educators and researchers alike.

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